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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Lord of the harvest, we continue to seek You, for we desire to do Your will. You are the strength of our lives.

As our lawmakers strive to walk uprightly, provide them with the harvest of truth, justice, and righteousness. May they cultivate such ethical congruence that their rhetoric will be undergirded by right actions.

Lord, keep them aware of Your continuous presence as they find in You fullness of joy. Show them the path to life as Your truth brings them to a safe harbor.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. HYDE-SMITH). The majority leader is recognized.

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Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, earlier this week, Senate Democrats stopped filibustering the important legislation before us. They finally joined Republicans and voted to advance these measures to renew our commitment to Israel, deepen our cooperation with Jordan, and deliver justice

for the victims of Assad's brutality in Syria.

But it appears some of my Democratic colleagues are not finished with their obstruction just yet.

On Tuesday, I offered a straightforward amendment to allow for a straightforward debate about the Senate's continued commitment to ongoing missions in Syria and Afghanistan. It is not a partisan amendment. It is not complicated. There is no poison pill—just an opportunity for Senators to go on the record about what our country should be doing in Syria and Afghanistan.

I have been clear about my own views on these subjects. I believe the threats remain. ISIS and al-Qaida have yet to be defeated, and American national security interests require continued commitment to our missions there.

But I guess some Senate Democrats don't want to vote on these important subjects. Perhaps it could have put some of my colleagues with aims beyond the Senate at odds with parts of the far left. Whatever the reason, our colleagues tried to avoid taking a position and tried to block my amendment from getting a vote.

Make no mistake. Today, the Senate will vote on this amendment. Members will go on the record for our allies and our partners in the Middle East.

When Senator RUBIO introduced S. 1, which is just a collection of bipartisan bills, I hoped for an open amendment process so that the Senate could debate important matters of national security. I am disappointed that our friends on the other side of the aisle have chosen to make that impossible.

Another issue I had hoped we could address is America's ironclad commitment to the transatlantic alliance. NATO has a proud history of delivering greater security to America and our allies and greater peace to the world. We stood shoulder to shoulder with our NATO allies throughout the Cold War; they stood with us following 9/11.

NATO's mission in Afghanistan today is an essential element of bringing peace and stability to that troubled country.

NATO will continue to be critical to transatlantic security, but it must adapt to new challenges. The United States has made significant new investments in our security posture in Europe, most notably through troop deployments all along the eastern flank and through the European Deterrence Initiative, which has bipartisan support here in Congress.

Former Secretary Mattis was also instrumental in pushing NATO to reform, especially in the areas of capabilities modernization, readiness, and military mobility. These reforms are essential to ensuring NATO readiness.

President Trump has also reaffirmed our Nation's commitment to NATO. As recently as just a few days ago, he said the United States will "be with NATO 100 percent."

The President is right to call upon our allies to contribute their fair share toward our collective defense. As NATO's Secretary General recently explained, President Trump has "clearly stated that NATO allies need to invest more. . . . we agreed to do more . . . and now we see the results. . . . by the end of next year, NATO allies will add . . . 100 billion extra U.S. dollars [for] defense."

Here is how the Secretary General summed it up: "So we see some real money, and some real results, and we see that the clear message from President Trump is having an impact."

We need to build on this momentum and continue strengthening NATO, dispelling all doubt—all doubt—about America's commitment to this alliance, which has reshaped history for the better.

NATO deserves the Senate's support. I believe it has the Senate's support, and at some point I hope this institution is able to debate that matter.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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